

PATH 1: SAVING HUMANITY

WHAT IS SAVIORISM?

The idea that an individual person or group of people are responsible for assisting others or have a responsibility for saving or upholding an aspect of humanity. Saviorism looks like:

- Positioning oneself as a Hero
- A desire to “rescue” others
- Non-systemic activism or band-aids
- Individually focused service

“Oppressed people don’t need your rescuing from our current situations; we need you to use your privilege to take down the systems oppressing us brick by brick” –Alexandria Love

Consider: Why do I want to help others? Do others want my help?



Figure of Christ by Alexander Ivanov (1833-1857)



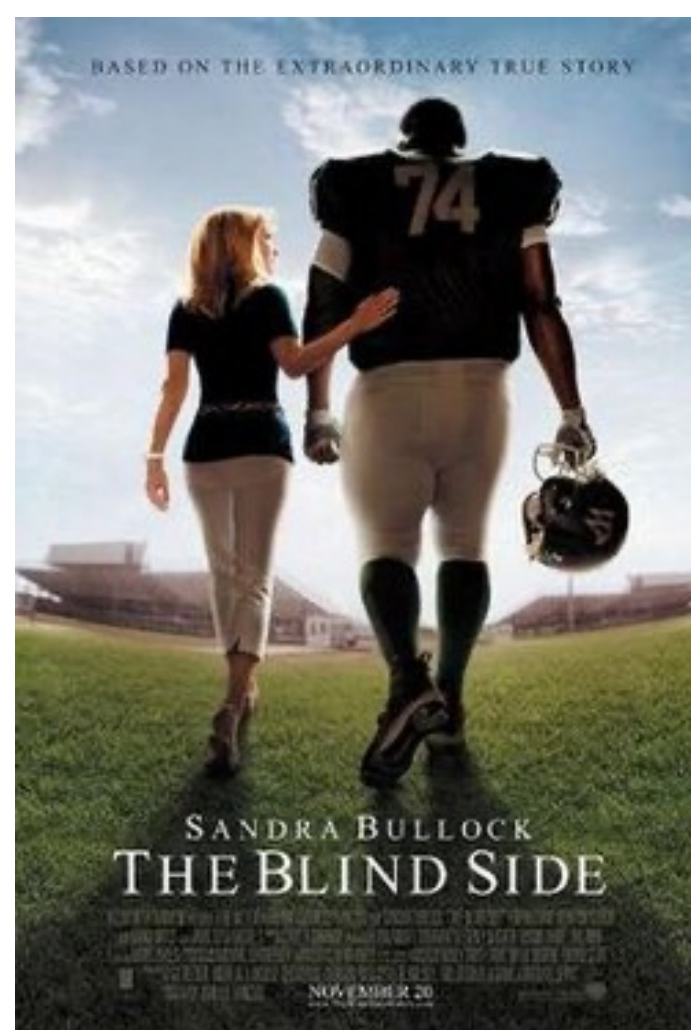
Neo from the film the Matrix (1999)



Frodo and Sam guided by Gollum through the Dead Marshes by Alexander Korotich (1984)



Danaerys Targaryen from The Game of Thrones (Novel 1996 – HBO Series 2011-2019)



Poster for The Blind Side (2009)



Doctor Who (1963-Ongoing)

*you'll notice that “performative” is prefaced with [anti], that is because the word performative means “to enact” or “cause something to happen”. In popular media, when people use “performative” they often mean the opposite.

GOOD INTENTIONS AND [ANTI]-PERFORMATIVITY

Saviorism exists because good intentions *can* lead to problematic approaches due to:

- [anti]-performative actions, meaning they do not lead to long-term change
- Desire to assist does not match ability
- Lack of voice by the community served
- An imbalance of power in values and/or enforcement of belief systems

A “savior complex” occurs when to desire to help becomes intertwined with an individual’s sense of self-worth leading to:

- Co-dependency
- Excessive self-sacrifice
- Devaluing the beliefs and values of others

Related is the sociological idea of the “white savior” through [anti]-performative actions from:

- White people’s desire to help non-White people in ways that are often self-serving, conscious or otherwise.
- A neo-colonialist act motivated by good intentions by those with the most privilege but leading to [anti]-performative actions that do not address systemic concerns.

“Those who were moved by emotion only will end their temporary advocacy and limited allyship once their emotions move them past the shock of these public events.” –Gena Lopez

Consider:

- How do I benefit due to my class, race, religion, gender, or sexuality? How might it effect my ability to do good if left unquestioned?
- Does my intent match my impact?
- Is there potential for harm if my ability does not match my goals?

MOVING FROM SAVIOR TO ALLYSHIP/CO-CONSPIRATOR

The Anti-Oppression Network defines an ally as: “An active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating , in which a person in a position of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group.”

The National Education Association defines a co-conspirator as: “Someone who is compelled to take action against racism and oppression regardless of the consequences [. . .] unapologetically anti-racist and committed to dismantling the system of White supremacy culture and the benefits received from it.”

Consider:

- How does being an ally and co-conspirator differ from supporting a cause?